2:Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1

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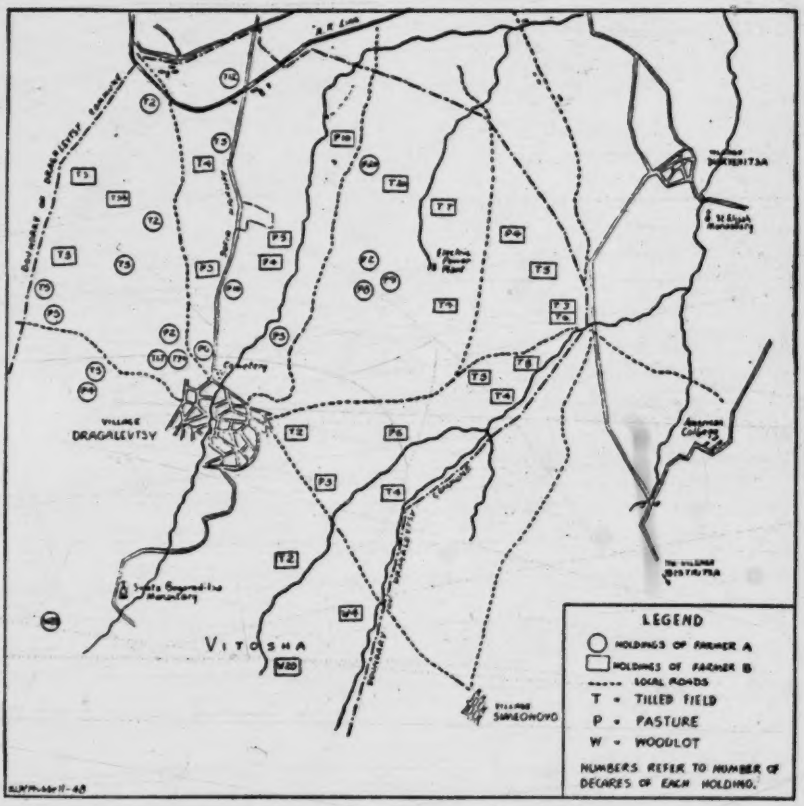

Map of holdings of two Dragalevtsy farmers

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Should drought be very severe, say in midsummer, the villagers asked for another procession and additional prayers to do more effectively what the May procession had failed to do.[1] The need for such ceremonies was explained to me one day by a tavern keeper: "While the people know in their minds that wind keeps the rain away from their fields, they believe in their hearts that the cause of drought, like that of sickness, is the sinfulness of the world today for which God is punishing the people."

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The chief bread-grain used in this region was called *smes*, a mixture of wheat and rye. It was sown by hand from a bag slung over

[1] [i.e. ensure a good harvest -- Analyst]

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the shoulder. In late July harvesters came from other villages to help at least one-third of the families (the others harvested their own grain) to cut the grain with sickles and place the stalks in little piles. An old man, expert through years of practice, then made up the sheaves by tying together a bundle of stalks with the longest stalks taken from a previous sheaf. He used a round, pointed stick about fourteen inches long to make the grain compact and to tie the knot ingeniously.

Most of the grain was threshed by the hoofs of animals, usually horses, on the packed, earthen threshing floors near the house. The Karakachani, a band of Wallachians from the village of Yakoruda in the Rhodope Mountains, brought about fifty horses to the village at threshingtime. A peasant paid the equivalent of a dollar a day for the service of a team. The grain was placed in the center of the floor, near a pole to which the animals were hitched. Around and around the pole the horses walked until the rope's length was used up, whereupon they reversed their direction. Much grain was threshed by the machine owned by some of the wealthier men of the village, which was beginning to supplant the old-fashioned threshing floors. Some of the families still winnowed the grain by tossing it in the face of a stiff breeze, but many others had access to a separating machine in the neighborhood.

But this *smes,* or wheat and rye mixture, was not the only crop raised. Quite a few of the homes had garden patches, either in the yard or on the edge of the village, where peppers, mealy potatoes, cabbages, and tomatoes were grown. The white beans from Dragalevtsy were said to be the best in this part of Bulgaria.

Some families grew sunflowers in order to sell the seeds for oil. Pumpkins from the cornfields were prized for use in a soggy pumpkin pie called *banitsa.* Fruit raising was decidedly underdeveloped, but the trees that were properly cared for produced very well. Straw for the animals was frequently borrowed or purchased from the wealthier peasants who had a surplus from the threshing.

The crop second in importance to *smes,* however, was corn. Of considerable interest were the groups of women who hoed the cornfield first in one direction, and a week later in a different direction. Varying in number from three to fifteen, these groups did

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"Plowing had the flavor of an antique ritual." *See page 42.*

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". . . harvesters . . . cut the grain with sickles, and placed the stalks in little piles." *See page 44.*

[Facing p. 48]

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787 that it would rain if the crows bathed in the river, if the sun set or
821 rose behind a cloud or was surrounded by a circle, or if the oxen dug the earth with their horns in the springtime. When the moon was surrounded by a dark circle, the weather would supposedly change to rain if it was summer and to snow if winter. Rain would also follow if the stars shone brightly, the sky was red in the morning, or the middle part of Vitosha was foggy. But the surest sign of bad weather was the sight of pigs carrying straw to the sty at sunset. Yet good weather alone did not ensure good crops. The human element was of utmost importance.

464 Bulgaria had, according to prewar figures, the largest labor
241 supply per decare in Europe, with 5.8 workers available for 100 decares (25 acres) of land. Italy came next with 4.7, then Poland with 4.3, but Great Britain had only 0.7. In spite of such a surplus of labor the people had not begun to cultivate intensively. An increasing number of young people therefore had to seek a living from sources off the farm. Such intensive cultivation, however, would require radical changes in farming practices. Not more than thirty Dragalevtsy families saved liquid fertilizer, although the rest did haul wagonload after wagonload of manure from the stables to the fields late in the winter to be dumped in piles awaiting later spreading. There was very little harrowing, and what was done took place in the spring after the rains.

● 243 The cornfields were plowed under at once after the harvest and were immediately sown with grain. If the field had produced *smes*, the stubble was plowed under to lie fallow for one or two years. The fallow fields were plowed once in the spring, once in the middle of the summer, and again in the autumn just before the grain was to be sown.

What might be considered a Bulgarian counterpart of our Thanksgiving feast occurred at the time of this fall sowing of grain. Early in the morning the woman arose quietly to bake one large and two small loaves of bread, and to catch a young rooster which she handed over to her husband just before he was ready to start to the field in the oxcart. What followed was the observance of a pagan fertility rite. With the dignity of a priest performing an ancient sacrifice, the

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stopanin, or male head of the house, killed the cock and held its twitching body over a bag of grain seed so that several drops of blood would fall upon it. He then drove slowly to the field to prepare the ground for the sowing, meanwhile eagerly awaiting the arrival at midmorning of the *domakinya,* his wife, dressed in her most beautiful costume and bearing a pan containing the boiled cock, meal, and bread. The family group made a tour once around the field, whereupon the man solemnly broke the bread and, before sitting with the others in the middle of the field to feast, gave pieces of the bread to the oxen. The peasants called this the "sweetest meal of the year" and delighted in having friends from a neighboring field join them in the repast. Summer's hard work was at an end; the harvests were plentiful; the peasants were deeply grateful.

Life in these scattered fields of Dragalevtsy was hard and laborious, but to the peasant, life without the fields would not be worth living, for these narrow strips of land were his children growing under his painstaking care. The land was his companion and friend, as he shared with it the thoughts and dreams of a starlit summer night, with a cloak for a pillow and dew for a blanket. Land meant more to the peasant than money in the bank; it meant more than food on the table; it meant life itself.

Some years ago I heard a Sofia University professor say in a lecture that the Bulgarian peasant was more devoted to his work than to his religion. "There are more songs dedicated to labor than to saints," he added. Because I wondered about the truth of this statement in respect to Dragalevtsy, I polled village opinion. Here are some of the questions I asked, with representative or characteristic responses:

Nowadays, which do people enjoy most: working in the field or sitting in the tavern?

"People work to get bread. They can't earn money enough to save. Some prefer to work in the fields because we quarrel when we are in the *kruchma.*"

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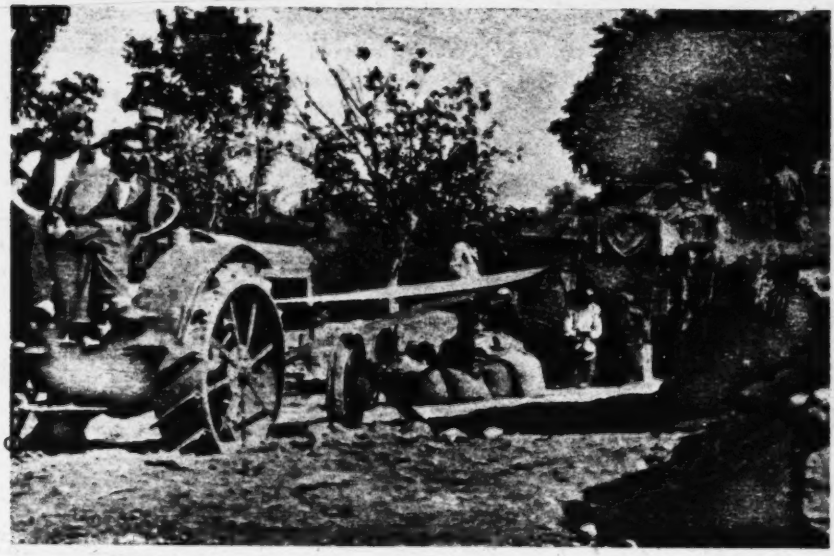

". . . they threshed the wheat of fifty-five farms . . ." *See page 151.*

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"The people . . . customarily associated liquor with holidays and leisure times." *See page 155.*

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than in many other Bulgarian communities. The secretary of the General Union of Bulgarian Agricultural Cooperatives explained: "The farmers live near the city and prefer to market their goods themselves rather than through the medium of co-operatives. They find that they get higher prices in the Sofia bazaar than they would receive from co-operatives." 476

Nevertheless, the three co-operatives represented in Dragalevtsy gave me some insight into the reasons for success and failure of those which did get off to a start. The co-operative which had made most progress in Dragalevtsy was a purely local affair which arose to meet a definite need. In some respects it was more like a corporation than a co-operative, but it was a "combining together" to get something done.

One of the richer families in the village used to spend twenty-five days threshing its grain with horses. As a result, the family began to think of using a machine to do the work. The idea incubated until Trayko Danev decided to take the initial plunge and persuaded his relatives to plunge with him. Two other men joined them in the purchase of a threshing machine in 1930. Their purpose was to thresh their own wheat and, if possible, thresh the wheat of others for a fair return. The first years of the ring's existence, when the price of wheat was high, were the best years. Between 1935 and 1937 the prices were so low that the group just managed to cover its expenses. However, because of their 400,000 leva ($4,878 at 1937 exchange rate) investment, the men did not think of giving up the ring. 476 243

The structure of this group was simple. Annually, a president, a treasurer, and a manager were elected to control the operations of the ring. The manager, who had technical training, received a salary. Two workers and a machinist were employed from outside and were paid a percentage of the wheat threshed. In 1935 they threshed the wheat of fifty-five farms, including that of the original ten partners. A written agreement existed among all members, who paid in wheat, which was sold for a sum to be divided among the members.

The familistic background of this group was interesting. The originators were all members or cousins of the Danev family except two rich landowners living in the center of the village, who were close friends of the Danevi. After four of the original partners died, 596 476 243

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596 their sons or sons-in-law succeeded to the control of their shares. The
476 five Danevi outnumbered the others, forming a unit around which
● 243 clustered three other members. There was some friction whenever meetings were held, but the minority was easily suppressed by the majority.

Most of the group considered membership an honor, symbolizing wealth and importance. Generally the village approved its existence, as shown by the increasing number of families who sought its services at threshing time.

476 Twenty-one Dragalevtsy men also belonged to the Animal Hus-
234 bandry-Dairy Cooperative, with headquarters in Sofia. This group had a twofold aim: (1) to enable members to get animal feed on credit and more cheaply; (2) to develop a milk distributing center. Though Dragalevtsy members did not have regular meetings in the village, most of them attended the annual meeting held in Sofia at which the reports of the officers of the co-operative were read. Before this annual meeting the Dragalevtsy men got together in the village and agreed on common action at the Sofia meeting. Dragalevtsy had one representative on the Executive Committee and one on the Control Committee. These men kept the villagers informed as to the condition of the co-operative. Two or three Dragalevtsy people had resigned, recently saying that "there were hidden matters." Most of the men who still belonged said that their membership entitled them to cheaper feed for their animals. I asked ten of the members why they belonged to the co-operative:

"I get cheaper feed through the co-operative."

"I joined in order to work collectively; to have a central depot for milk."

"The co-operative gives credit for food at a lower price."

The agricultural crisis through which Bulgaria had been passing reflected itself in the life of this co-operative. With the hard times, peasants said they did not have enough ready cash for their dues, and so dropped out. However, one could not consider this a true village organization because its physical basis was Sofia, and there was no formal organization operating in Dragalevtsy as a local.

241 423 the application of this measure would be multiple. It would increase the available surface for cultivation by 10%. It would effect a great saving of time to the farmers, who would no longer be obliged to waste their time by visiting scattered holdings, but who would then only have to attend to one. It would permit the rationalisation of agriculture by making feasible the use of agricultural machinery. So far this extreme parcellation of the land has proved an unsuperable obstacle to the employ of modern implements. Thus during the period 1925—1930 some 2620 tractors were bought, at a cost of 1000 million leva, but it has been found impossible to utilise them for ploughing, and the only use they have been put to was to make them work the threshing machines.

However alluring this prospect of regrouping the holdings may be, it is regrettable that it can not be realised for lack of funds. As matters stand an extensive use of expensive agricultural machinery is not likely to prove profitable when there is plenty of cheap labour available and imported oil fuel is dear; besides, the smallholder would scarcely possess sufficient means to acquire them and would not know how to keep them in good condition.[1]

241 243 The utilisation of machinery on the farms could be lucratively carried out only if it mere undertaken on a co-operative basis, but in such a case it would be necessary to found co-operative societies in every village before proceeding with the wholesale employ of machinery. However, even with such improvements, Bulgaria could

[1] During the Liaptchev administration the government undertook to introduce by hook or crook modern machinery, and a large number was foisted on the peasantry but never utilised. Many complaints were made as to the peasantry having been encouraged to run into debt merely in order to buy machines. The exposures made by certain deputies on May 22 and 30, 1932, on this subject are not at all edifying.

not hope to compete in cereal growing with transoceanic countries, and the only advantage to be derived would be to continue raising the same amount of cereals on a more restricted area by employing more advanced methods of cultivation, in order that more land be diverted to other crops demanding more labour and skill.[1] The table on page 184 gives particulars as to the main varieties of cereals cultivated, and their respective yield during the last years

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The harvest of 1934 was affected by drought in the early part of the summer, and the yield was considerably under the average of recent years as may be gauged by the following figures:

	Average yield per hectare during 1930—1934	Yield in 1933 per hectare	Yield in 1934 per hectare
Wheat	1157 kg	1204 kg	902 kg
Rye	1092 „	1180 „	868 „
Mixture of barley and wheat . . .	1228 „	1248 „	993 „
Barley	1240 „	1441 „	806 „
Oats	816 „	983 „	578 „
Maize	1232 „	1309 „	1221 „

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[654]

[1] Cereal growing is not a remunerative occupation and can only be carried on thanks to the subsidies offered by the State. It has to be carried on however, because Bulgaria can not afford to pay for imported cereals. Their production therefore should be adjusted to local requirements in order to restrict the amount of subsidies disbursed to the minimum.

The cost of wheat may be computed at 2·77 leva per kg., the following items entering into the cost of production per hectare: Ploughing and sowing 2,100, harvesting 300, transport to threshing machine and threshing 400, transport to market 100, seed 250 kg. at 1·25 = 321 25, total 3212·5 leva. Average production per hectare 1157 kg.

In transoceanic countries the cost of production is about 1·25 leva per kg., with a tendency for a further reduction judging from

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BULGARIA-PAST & PRESENT

	Annual average for period 1927—1931		1931		1932		1933		1934	
	Area sown in 1000 hectares	Output in 1000 quintals	Area sown in 1000 hectares	Output in 1000 quintals	Area sown in 1000 hectares	Output in 1000 quintals	Area sown in 1000 hectares	Output in 1000 quintals	Area sown in 1000 hectares	Output in 1000 quintals
Wheat	1,159·9	13,470·6	1,247	17,507·5	1,256·3	13,903	1,246	16,166	1260	11,382
Rye	222·1	2,318	232 9	2,705·9	220·1	2,575	212	2.760	192 4	1,670
Mixture of barley & wheat	99·1	1.128·6	104·6	1,413	89·8	951	88	1,165	85·6	850
Barley	243·2	3,204	244·8	3,453·1	230·3	3.070·3	234	3,599	230·2	1,855·4
Oats	133·2	1,065	118 6	1,024·7	113·8	1,128·7	134	1,556	126·4	730·3
Millet	13·9	141·1	8·5	118·8	12·5	156·5	7	87	7·7	67·5
Maize	698·4	7302	680·4	8,887	740·1	10,544·2	713	10,430	670 9	8,194·9
Rice	7·4	102·6	6·9	90·5	5·4	89·4	6	88	5·9	87·8
Total	2,577·8	287,33·8	2,655·1	35,201·2	2,658·3	32.419·8	2,640	35,851	2,578·4	24,837·9

the following passage in Viscount Astor's „Land and Life" p. 55 „Costs of many producers in North America are approaching 24/—per quarter, while one farming 30,000 acres, expects to be able to sell with substantial profit at less than 17/—" (about 0·95 leva per kg).

AGRICULTURE

The yield per hectare has been increased, thanks to the efforts of the State Agriculturists and those of the experimental stations. It is affirmed that for about ⅓ of the area sown to wheat selected seed has been utilised from certain new varieties of wheat from which as high a yield as 2650 kg. per hectare has been obtained at the experimental stations, but only 1675 to 1766 kg. when sown in the average farmsteads. This has contributed in raising the yield from about 1000 kg. per hectare during the pre-war period to 1157 kg. at the present time.

Though about ¾ of the cultivated land is devoted to cereals, 90% of the total output is absorbed locally, and only 10% is available for export in ordinary circumstances. Often, when the harvest is below the average there is little or nothing to export. The last international wheat Conference held in 1932 fixed Bulgaria's annual export quota of cereals at 2,500,000 quintals, or 236,000 tons, but in the export campaign of 1933/34, the quantity available for export did not reach this figure, and in the following season the cereals exported amounted to some 175,000 tons, so that it may be reckoned that Bulgaria has ceased counting as a grain exporting country. In fact the average Bulgarian farmstead does not produce sufficient grain for its own requirements, and it is only the larger ones, those of over 10 hectares, that have a surplus for disposal. This renders the majority of farmers unaffected by the fluctuation of prices since they consume their own produce, and strange as it seems, the fall in the prices of agricultural produce must on the whole be beneficial to them, since Prof. Y. Mollov, former Minister of Agriculture, affirms in the Annuaire of the Sofia University for 1933 (Agricultural Dept.) that the peasantry on the whole buy more than they sell. the proportion of their purchases to their sales being the following:

	Year 1929—30	Year 1930—1	Year 1931—2	Average
North Bulgaria	171,06%	146,01%	110.70%	142.59%
Sofia region	179.90%	158.43%	158.28%	165.53%
South Bulgaria	119.60%	125.60%	186.23%	143.81%

This of course has been possible owing to the credits which they have been able to raise from the Agricultural Bank, and to their not applying them to the specific purposes for which these loans were granted; the Agricultural Bank having extended to the rural population credits amounting on an average to 7360 leva per hectare for the smaller category of farmsteads. It must not be thought however that the peasantry has been living wastefully, and has run into debt owing to its being profligate. Very often in periods of drought the Agricultural Bank, under pressure from the State, has been compelled to come to the assistance of the peasantry and to supply them with seed and food, practically with no guarantee. This will largely explain the excessive advances which the Bank has made to the rural population, which, if it were not for this timely aid would have literally starved.

The source of the trouble is that the available land is unsufficient to support the population, and that if it be not provided with more land in order to increase its production up to its requirements, or if it be not assisted financially in order to modernise its methods of cultivation, and thus be able to raise a larger quantity of products on the land it actually possesses, there will be grave danger of a dislocation of the present social fabric

Prof. St. Tsolakov, a colleague of Prof. Dolinski, has published a most interesting essay in the 1934 Annuaire de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes Commerciales, of Varna, on the position of the farmers in the Varna region, and on their indebtedness to the State. It is certainly representative of the whole country, and the study of the figures he supplies will convince any one that the problem